

SIR HENRY LEFROY'S JOURNEY TO THE NORTH-WEST
IN 1843-4

Edited by W. S. WALLACE, F.R.S.C.

INTRODUCTION

IN 1843, a young English artillery subaltern, named John Henry Lefroy, who had in 1841 been placed in charge of the new observatory at Toronto, was instructed to proceed to the Hudson's Bay Territories to make a magnetic survey of those little known regions. He spent over eighteen months in his survey; and many years later, when he had become General Sir J. H. Lefroy, C.B., K.C.M.G., F.R.S., etc., he published his *Diary of a Magnetic Survey of a Portion of the Dominion of Canada, Chiefly in the North-western Territories* (London, 1883). This *Diary*, however, is of a strictly scientific character; and it is not generally known that before his death in 1890, Sir Henry Lefroy wrote an *Autobiography*, which was printed by his widow in 1895 "for private distribution only", and that in this *Autobiography* there is a much more human and personal account of his journey to the Hudson's Bay Territories. At any rate, so far as I am aware, no use has been made by historians of these vivid and entertaining pages; and since Sir Henry Lefroy's *Autobiography* is extremely rare, and is probably to be found in very few libraries, it has seemed worth while to reproduce here, with a few notes, that part of it which relates to the Canadian North-west in 1843-4—more especially since our sources of information with regard to the Canadian North-west at this period are far from abundant.

For permission to reprint these chapters I am indebted to the kindness of Sir Richard Henry Chenevix-Trench, Sir Henry Lefroy's grandson.

Lefroy's footnotes to his own narrative are indicated by asterisks; those of the editor are denoted by Roman numerals.

W. S. W.

JOURNEY TO THE HUDSON BAY TERRITORY (1843)

Now begins the second act of my humble part on the theatre of life.

The night of the 30th April was my first experience under canvas. Leaving Lachine late in the afternoon, the brigade of canoes in which I had passage paddled leisurely to the Isle Dorval, a small island in the St. Lawrence, two or three miles off. Here we encamped to see that everything was right. It was a wet and chilly night, and the excitement and strangeness of everything almost precluded sleep. My equipment consisted of a small ridge tent about eight

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feet wide, ten long and seven high. This I shared with Bombardier Henry, my assistant. I had a large chest or *cassette* for clothes and books, a canteen and provision basket, a gun and a rifle, and about ten boxes of instruments. The bedding was made up in a roll, which furnished a seat in the canoe.

The canoes, called *canots de maître*, were of the largest size, such as were then used as far as Fort William. The whole brigade was under the command of chief trader John Maclean,¹ a gentleman of whom I afterwards saw a great deal.

The real voyage began at not a very early hour on the 1st May; any indulgence on this occasion being amply made up for afterwards. Our practice was to start at about half-past three every morning, and halt for breakfast about half-past seven; when I observed for time and variation, which does not take long; again at 1.30 P.M. for dinner. Then the other canoes pushed on, mine remained behind until I had finished my other observations; and I seldom overtook them much before 8 P.M. Writing to my cousin Julia from Lac des Chats on the Ottawa on the 6th May, I said:

"I should like to place you at the door of my tent to look with me over our picturesque encampment. Imagine a table of rock showing its grey face between patches of moss and grass, with young firs and cedars springing out of crevices around. Three large birch-bark canoes, the most graceful vessels perhaps that float, lie bottom upwards, with their keels to the wind, the open side to the fires. Under them, or before them, are lying or lounging about fifty *voyageurs* or Indians, talking their old-French *patois*, with many profane expressions. The light plays on the white tents and on their red caps and shirts with effects worthy of a Rembrandt.

"We made the first portage to-day at the Chat Falls. Like most others on this line, their height is inconsiderable; their beauty is in the clear water shooting and darting in a hundred directions round rocks and islets clothed with graceful groups of firs and birches overhanging the channels.

"The canoes are very large, each carries thirteen or fourteen *voyageurs* and generally four passengers; mine, however, but three—myself, Captain Stacke, 71st Regiment, and Corporal Henry. Stacke is a most pleasant, good-natured fellow, always ready for anything, but rather disappointed in his hopes of sport. He accompanies us as far as Fort William. The rest of the party consists of two officers of the Hudson's Bay Company, three or four young clerks, a half-breed from the *Columbia*, who has been studying medicine, and two women whose history I do not yet know."

I travelled in this company until the 29th of the month, but I really saw very little of the others, being always too busy to be sociable, even in camp.

At this time there was no agricultural settlement above Bytown (now

¹This was John McLean (1799-1890), the author of *Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory* (2 vols., London, 1849; reprinted, with introduction and notes, Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1932). McLean evidently conceived a great admiration and friendship for Lefroy, for he writes, "This gentleman seems equal to all the hardships and privations of a *voyageur's* life", and describes him as "the ablest *mangeur de lard* we have had in the country for a number of years". "Few gentlemen", he writes later, "have acquired so general esteem as Mr. Lefroy; his gentlemanly bearing and affable manners endeared himself to us all."

Ottawa); the Upper Ottawa was given up to lumberers, who had cleared off the large timber to a point far beyond my furthest. We left the river on the 12th at a point called Mattawa, to ascend a small stream conducting to a low *divide* between the Ottawa and Lake Nipissing, which latter we entered on the 14th, and Lake Huron on the 16th. Their difference of level is only eighty-five feet, but the descent by French River is broken by numerous rapids and one fall, the Ricollet's Fall, which commemorates the martyrdom of some *Religious* of that order at the hands of the Hurons in the seventeenth century.

I remember our halt at Fort La Cloche on Lake Huron (May 18) by an incident which illustrates the power and value of discipline. I noticed my *Iroquois butte*, or steersman, coming out of the company's storehouse with a can in his hand, and a manner which suggested something wrong. Going up to him I took the can quietly out of his hand; it was full of whisky, which I immediately poured out upon the ground. Laurent took his place in the canoe without a word.

The Sault de S. Marie, which we reached on Saturday, 20th May, was at that time the ordinary limit of western travel; all beyond was wilderness and prairie. There was a frontier fort and a few houses on the American side, nothing on the British side except the Hudson's Bay trading post. I went down the rapids in a canoe, but it was no great exploit, although so reputed. We made no stay there, however, for fear of some of the men deserting, but pushed on to a well-known camping-ground, Pointe aux Pins, about seven miles beyond at the opening of Lake Superior.

Here began next morning our pleasant coasting voyage round the lake, which took a week. I crossed it in 1884 with my dear wife, by steamer, in less than a day.

I had some experience of the dangers of the lake the day we left the Pic. The brigade had as usual pushed on, while I remained behind to finish my afternoon observations; meanwhile the wind and the sea got up, and they were forced to put ashore at Pic Island. It was pretty rough when I started, but got so much worse that I would have gladly turned back, but this was impossible. A heavily laden birch-bark canoe is no craft to face a heavy sea, but we had to keep on, and by God's good providence and the strength and coolness of my two *buttes*, we effected the transit in safety, though our companions, when we rejoined them, declared that they had given us up, and were considerably engaged in erecting a cairn to our memory. The same place was very nearly fatal next year. I was detained at the Pic from the 16th to the 22nd October, 1844 by stress of weather, and as the resources of the fort were seriously overtaxed by having eight extra mouths to feed so long, I insisted on proceeding, much against the advice of Louis. There was a heavy sea breaking over the bar at the mouth of the river. By great skill Louis dodged and rolled over two or three of the rollers, then one broke fairly on board and swamped us. "Le canot est fondu! Le canot est fondu!" broke from the Canadians at once. Louis looked back from his place in the bow with reproach in his dark countenance, then uttered some vigorous words; the Canadians began to bale out the water, and in a few minutes we were safe. But we were obliged after all to give it up. I had to land as soon as a suitable place could be found, and we were again detained until the 26th.

To resume the narrative of 1843. The grand scenery of the north shore and the wonderful transparency of the water were a constant pleasure; the

rocky bottom seemed in many places to have been smoothed and polished by ice action; we could see every vein. On the 27th we halted for a short time on an island off S. Ignace, which presented as fine a display of regular basaltic columns as Staffa itself. The next day we reached the extremity of the long tongue of land off Thunder Cape; hence the *traversée* to Fort William is about equal to the width of the Straits of Dover (about fourteen or fifteen miles), and is only attempted in fine weather. We waited some hours for a calm, and at last, starting about 8 P.M., reached the fort at midnight.

Fort William was even then but the shadow of its former self, and I found it in 1884 dwarfed into entire insignificance by the rising city of "Prince Arthur's Landing," when I met the identical gentleman, then in the Hudson's Bay service, who had made me welcome forty years before. It was founded by the North-West Company, and on their amalgamation with the Hudson's Bay Company, ceased to be a great *depôt*, as the latter sent their stores out and their furs home by York Factory. Extensive ranges of sheds and warehouses were falling into decay.

I was three days here, and left at 4.15 A.M. on the 1st June. Here, too, I received a canoe of smaller size, the *Canot du Nord*, for my own use with its guide and crew, parting company with the brigade altogether and also with my friend Captain Stacke.

As the circuitous route then followed has long since been abandoned, and has probably reverted to its primitive condition, I subjoin an account of it which I gave to my mother in a letter of July 1st, 1843:—

"Our course lay up a very pretty stream with only one short portage where the current was too strong. Next day, June 2nd, I had to land about an hour after starting to lighten the canoe, and to walk six or seven miles over hills and swamps. There were two or three streams to be waded, in one of which one of the women in the main party that had preceded us had got an unfortunate ducking. Stacke gallantly volunteered to carry her over. No! said one of the young fellows, let me do it! But she was a portly dame and beyond his strength. A stagger, a cry, and both rolled in the water!

"The next portage, P. Ecarté, cost me one of my superfluous luxuries. The fort had insisted on my taking on a small keg of port wine, and the fellow who carried it across took advantage of my being engaged to tap it; no doubt they all took a share. I saw at once what had occurred when I came up, and as soon as I had taken my seat, made them hand me the keg, which I pitched into the river! There would have been no safety while a drop remained.

"The beautiful Falls of Kakabeka are at the head of this portage; the second in grandeur, but hardly second in beauty to Niagara. A deep black, glassy stream without a fleck of foam pours down from the reservoir of Lac du Chiens, between high well-wooded banks, and plunges obliquely into a chasm about 170 feet in depth. It is very difficult to get a good view of the falls from below, but at the cost of getting drenched, I managed to do so.

"June 3rd took us to the first of the long portages conducting to Lac du Chiens; it is about two and a half miles, with a very steep hill to be passed over. To carry a heavy canoe over such a place and then return again and again for the baggage, which is carried in loads of ninety or a hundred pounds, is such labour as you would not easily imagine. We got to the foot at about 4.30 P.M., but could not get the greater part of the *butin* more than half way, and so tired were the men that though it was a frosty night, they preferred sleeping without

their blankets to going back a mile for them. (P.S.—I seem to recollect, 1887, having gone back for them myself.) I could not get my tent pitched till nearly 10 P.M., but about half past three next morning, we set to work again and completed the portage, so as to start by 5 A.M.

"One of the Canadians was disposed here to be saucy to Baptiste Sateka, one of my Iroquois guides. The Indian took him up by his breeches and collar and tossed him like a dog into the canoe.

"One of the most beautiful views of the country, of which I made a sketch, occurs at the hill I have mentioned; a wide expanse of undulating country clothed with virgin forest, with the silver thread of the Chiens river winding through it, and the blue mountains of Lake Superior in the distance—a sleeping beauty which appealed strongly to the imagination, and which I have never forgotten.

"We began now to meet occasionally with Indians descending to Fort William with the produce of their winter hunt. There was a very pretty little child in one of these canoes asleep on a pile of rugs. I caressed it a little, watching the young mother's face, but it did not evince the slightest sign of satisfaction; a little brother or sister, who was watching the infant, was, however, less impassive, and laughed and kissed it with great glee. I gave the Indian some tobacco, as I do to nearly all I meet; then we shook hands and parted."

On the 5th June we reached the summit of the height of land which divides the streams which flow into Lake Superior, and ultimately into the Atlantic, by the St. Lawrence, from those which flow into Lake Winnipeg and ultimately into Hudson's Bay. It is 887 feet above Lake Superior, and about 1,500 feet above the sea. Hereabouts occur a wearisome succession of very long portages.

Coming sometimes to one of these before sunrise and walking across in advance of my party, while the dank mist was hanging over them, nothing can be conceived more silent, still and lifeless than their aspect.

As a general rule I carried a very tolerable load for a *bourgeois*: gun, barometer, desk, haversack with books, an axe; and if we were to breakfast, I got the fire forward and made myself useful.

From the Lake of the Thousand Islands, where the traveller embarks fairly on the descending streams (and where we had very wet weather) down to Rainy Lake, the route lay through a succession of pretty lakes emptying the one into the other by short crooked channels broken by falls and rapids, and necessitating many portages. The only maps I had to help me were Franklin's route maps made in his journey of 1819, and very creditable they were to his officers, but they were at the best imperfect, so that I have since had considerable difficulty in identifying my places of observation upon more recent ones. There is not to this day any map pretending to great accuracy.

Before entering Rainy Lake we pass a wide expansion of the stream called Sturgeon Lake, which has a very fine rapid at its outfall. Laurent wanted to encamp about half-past six, upon the plea that we should not have daylight enough to run the rapids, but I objected to this; we reached them just as the sun was setting, after a bright, cloudless day—June 12th. An Indian canoe was shooting about above them like a sea-bird over the waves. According to custom, the men were put ashore, all but the *butte* and myself. It is good to see an Indian approach a rapid. Laurent seemed to throw off twenty years at once; jumping up on the gunwale of the canoe, a moment's glance decided him as to his course; then jumping into his place and seizing his paddle, another

moment took him into the middle of it, tossing about on waves which appeared huge to me, and shooting past rocks where one false stroke might be fatal. This rapid is in three sections, and in the second of them his paddle got jammed; with a violent effort he freed it, and in a few more strokes we were out of the eddy and in still waters. We encamped at 8 P.M.

The Indian and his family lit their fires beside us. He had a good-looking young squaw and a number of children, shivering urchins in scanty rabbit-skin robes. We got some sturgeon, which is always regarded as fresh meat, in exchange for a little tobacco and some powder and shot.

The Indians sleep in a sitting position on their heels, cowering over the camp fire; it was a cold night, and they looked wretched enough.

Mr. Isbister² gave me a striking account of the behaviour of the Indians at the great meteoric shower of 1833 (Leonids, Nov. 12-13). They were fishing sturgeon by torchlight in the rapids, which do not freeze, for some time, and took no notice of the unusual number of shooting stars, but as they multiplied until the heavens were full of them, they became awe-stricken, and drawing their canoes on shore, sat quietly down in a circle, waiting in silent dignity the coming end of the world. The French Canadians, in terror, were calling upon all the saints. The contrast was striking.

There were a good many Indians hanging about during my observations, softly ejaculating "Mah-ne-too! mah-ne-too! wonderful! magic!" I spilt a little mercury, and they were like children in their endeavours to pick it up with their fingers and their laughter as the globules evaded them.

About twenty miles below Fort Frances which we left on the 15th June, we came to the first regular Indian village I had seen, and landed to purchase fish. The chief came down to receive me—a fine-looking man, painted, as most of them are, and wearing a large silver medal. After shaking hands I strolled through the lodges, leaving the men to make their own bargains. There were about twenty-five lodges surrounded by stages for drying fish, with a slippery path winding among them, and I should say, ten children and twenty dogs to each lodge. The latter were as usual made of poles meeting at a point and covered with birch-bark, which is cut in lengths of six or eight feet and three feet wide, capable of being rolled up conveniently, being as flexible as leather, and carried in their canoes. The squaws turned out in great numbers, laughing and chattering. The dogs were a great annoyance: more than one beast got a timid bite at my leg. I am not sure that it was here, but at one village I saw an unfortunate squaw who had lost all the fingers of both hands by frost-bite, but she had acquired a power of contracting the palms of the hands enough to hold an axe, and was actually engaged in chopping wood.

For six or eight inches of rolled tobacco we got twenty or thirty pounds weight of sturgeon.

A little below this village we came to a fleet of ten or twelve canoes fishing together—a pretty sight.

There is a Wesleyan missionary here, but not doing much good, as he can only speak at present through an interpreter. There are great difficulties in inducing the Chippeways to embrace Christianity or to send their children to school, not the least of these being the rivalry between Church of England, Church of Rome, Baptists and Wesleyans, all of whom have missionaries in the country.

²Thomas Isbister, an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company.

We entered the Lake of the Woods (1,062 feet above the sea) on Friday, 15th June, meeting with a grievous accident in the fracture of my last barometer, by the way.

We encamped in $49^{\circ} 4'$ (by Polaris) on Big Island, as I think, and by 8 A.M. next morning reached Falcon Island or Gardner Island, which is a mile or two south of it. We were then about thirty-five miles from the Rat Portage, and should have got there the next day; but about 5 A.M. on Sunday, Laurent announced that he had lost his way and insisted on returning to our last night's camp to pick it up. However, we met some Indians, and one of them agreed to pilot us. He left us at 4 or 5 P.M., and Laurent, who was in a channel he did not know, got bewildered again very soon.

After abusing the *sawage* for misleading him, he put back, but as it was then getting late and the sky looked threatening, I thought it best to put on shore for the night. Very well it was that we did so, for a terrific thunderstorm burst upon us immediately. I never saw a more magnificent sky. A fiery rainbow appeared just as the sun was setting, the space within it was bright sulphur colour, all without a heavy blue. Livid green and sulphur clouds were dashed in wild confusion over the western sky. The thunder never ceased; one continuous growl appeared to come from every quarter at once, and was truly awful. And here I witnessed the rare electric phenomenon of flashes of lightning from the earth upwards.

Next morning, June 19th, we renewed our search for the Rat Portage, but Laurent was totally bewildered, until I insisted upon returning to the head of the lake, and by so doing recovered the track. We finally got there at 8 A.M. on Tuesday, 20th.

I have never forgotten the bright chatter and musical laughter of a group of squaws and young girls at an awkward misadventure I had in a small native canoe, which I rashly thought I could navigate across a bay. These ladies were, I was told, Delawares; they did not appear to be Chippeways, but the Delaware tribe is generally regarded as extinct. They were clothed in a sort of chemise of rabbit-skins cut into strips. What I had done was to squat down in the bow of the canoe, which brought the stern out of the water, and it was almost impossible to guide it. A single sitter always places himself in the middle; however, I escaped upset.

The Canadian Pacific Railway now crosses the portage, and I revisited the spot in 1884. It was at night, and I failed to recognize any features in the scene.

An accident at this station determined my visit to the Red River, which was not in the programme, and caused a delay of ten days in my reaching my winter quarters. The Dip Circle was knocked over, and rendered for the time unserviceable.

We left the portage at 2.30 A.M. of the 21st, and the same day landed soon after noon in Lat. $50^{\circ} 10'$ to keep a magnetical term day. It was most fortunately very calm, allowing the instruments, which were in the open air, to be comfortably read off (three of them) at intervals of 5 minutes for 24 hours, commencing about 3 P.M. of local time, corresponding to 10^h Gött: Not a sound broke the silence of the night as Corporal Henry and I in turn took our station at the instruments, except the faint splash of the running stream and the occasional cry of a loon, which resembles the wail of a child. The sun set, the stars came out, and faded again as the morning dawned, still we stuck to our

work; but very glad was I when 3 P.M. came round again, and we could pack up and be off, and also go to sleep in the canoe.

These observations were not of much interest, and only swelled the volume of wasted labour, for nobody that I am aware of has ever even tried to sift them or deduce comprehensive results. Working always has been ahead of thinking and accumulating data, of comparing and reducing them. I can point to my Athabasca volume, pp. 88-91, as a proof that I tried at least to do my own share of this work, but it has never been noticed because the interest of the whole inquiry was largely factitious.

The navigation continued to be of the same intricate character—small lakes, crooked channels, rapids with innumerable portages—almost to Fort Alexander, which we reached on the 25th June, and I got to Lower Fort Garry on the 28th.

A singular little incident occurred on the previous day. We had to put on shore in consequence of the dangerous sea raised by a little wind on Lake Winnipeg, and I was engaged on an observation, the men having gone to sleep in the shade, when two very pretty little Indian girls appeared, and offered me something, which looked like boiled grass, on a birch-bark dish. It had a sweet taste, but was stringy and tough. I gave them a little sugar, and as soon as I was at liberty went to look for the lodge, which I supposed they had come from. There was no lodge to be found. I could not discover a trace of the children, and nobody else had seen them! Like fairies they had vanished. I certainly did not give myself much trouble, and there must have been a lodge not far off.

The very first person I met at Fort Garry, much to his surprise and my own, was Sir George Simpson,³ who had passed us on the Ottawa on the 5th May. The exploits of his light canoe were the talk of the north-west, but he urged on his men out of all bounds of humanity or reason. He was a short, thick-set man of florid Scotch complexion, could stand immense fatigue, and in particular could go an unusual time without food. Thus he has been known to start at two or three in the morning, and not halt for a meal for twelve hours.

He gave me a very warm welcome, and next day we rode on to the upper fort, where the city of Winnipeg now stands. When I revisited it, in 1884, the fort had disappeared, but I easily found the site, and identified the spot where my observations had been made.

Here I found a workman who could repair my Dip Circle, and stayed five days.

Lake Winnipeg (= muddy water), above the sea 710 feet, presents a marked contrast to most of the other great lakes, and gets its name from the quantity of calcareous matter it holds in solution.

Here I found great magnetic disturbance, and recorded the greatest magnetic force that has yet, as I believe, been observed on the globe:—

September 18th, 14.516.	September 16th, 15.382.
“ 17th, 14.393.	July 7th, 14.414.
July 6th, 14.462.	September 14th, 14.396.

At Toronto it was 13.942.

³Sir George Simpson (1792-1860) was Governor-in-Chief of Rupert's Land from 1821 to 1860. For an account of his life, see G. Bryce, *Mackenzie, Selkirk, Simpson* (Toronto, 1905).

These, perhaps, will not be to my readers very interesting or intelligible figures, but it was largely by them that the position and value of the Magnetic Pole was—assigned viz., its position in Lat. $52^{\circ} 19'$, Long. $91^{\circ} 59' W$. Its value 14.214.

It is about 300 miles from the mouth of the Red River to Norway House, a distance which took me eight days (including detentions, perhaps seven of real travelling). We arrived at the latter post on the evening of July 12th, and after a stay of two days left again for York Factory, on Hudson's Bay, on the 11th. I visited Norway House three times, and it is the base station of all my more northern observations.

July 23rd.—York Factory, being the great dépôt for the supply of goods for trade to the interior, was a large establishment, but its proximity to Hudson's Bay, and the consequent rigorous climate, the annual mean temperature being only $17^{\circ} 4'$ Fahr., made it a very unattractive place of residence. It has no beauty of scenery. The surrounding country is a barren swamp about fifty feet above sea level.

I have given already an illustration of the great strength of my Indian Sateka. I saw here another. The men were lounging about, making holiday, when the same man took up Baptiste Ayot, the Sancho Panza of the party, a short, thick-set, heavy man, and dropped him into an empty sugar hogshead, Baptiste, in real or pretended fright, screaming like a child.

We left York about 3 A.M. of the 28th July. For the first three days it was nearly all laborious tracking by line, along a very rough bank; then we reached the White Earth portage. There is nothing to describe in scenery; everywhere wooded banks, and never a distant view. Our encampment on the 5th August at the Painted Stone portage was, however, rendered memorable by one of the most magnificent auroras I ever witnessed.

The camp was pitched in a grove of tall pines, so that we scarcely noticed that there was an aurora until it reached the zenith, then battalions of lights wheeled and circled over the portion of sky visible to us. Great sheets seemed to be suddenly let down on our heads; many-tinted curtains in ever-moving, varying folds, all in intense motion, filled the heavens at one moment and disappeared the next.

I do not believe that the seat of this glorious display was more than one or two miles distant from the earth, and this was the conclusion from the fact that it was seen nowhere else—not at Norway House, about forty miles south, and not at any of the stations in lower latitudes where records were kept.

Two days afterwards I returned to Norway House, and the day of our arrival there, in the afternoon, was the only day in my whole tour when we ran out of provisions. The reindeer meat supplied to me at York Factory, which had been in ice nearly a year, turned so bad a day or two after we left the factory, the weather being very hot, that even the Canadians could not eat it, and it had to be thrown away. We had not enough of other provisions, and for the last twenty-four hours we had nothing, or next to nothing, to eat. My hospitable friend, Donald Ross,⁴ soon made us forget this hardship.

I took advantage of a leisure afternoon during this visit to visit the Wesleyan missionary schools and village at Ross-bank, a small island two or three miles

⁴Donald Ross (d. 1852), a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was in charge at Norway House for many years.

off, and try a new canoe. It was in charge of a zealous superintendent,⁵ who a very few weeks later had the great misfortune to kill his native, or half-bred interpreter, by his gun going off accidentally.

The accident was fatal to all his influence and usefulness. He had to leave the country, but not without leaving a lasting monument of his genius. He was the inventor of a mode of writing, admirably complete and simple, especially adapted to the peculiar polysyllabic language of the Crees, in which hundreds of books have been printed, and which remains in use to this day. I am not aware that it has ever attracted the attention of philologists, or that he ever got much credit for it.

In this system *nine* simple characters, each capable of being written in *four* ways, making therefore in fact thirty-six phonetic signs, as we might write the letter A—

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suffice, with the aid of a few accents and terminal consonants, to express all the elementary sounds of the spoken language, and they are expressly adapted to be scratched upon birch-bark. The Indians learned it readily, and entirely appreciated it.*

I found the Cree children (about sixty in number) bright and intelligent, but taught in an absurd way to read the Testament, sing hymns, and answer questions in some catechism in English, before they had learnt the language (if they ever did).

The question of baptizing heathen converts, living in a state of polygamy, received an illustration at this station at this time. A Cree Indian was prepared for baptism, but he had two wives, and the missionary would not receive him into his church until he had put away one of them. The poor, perplexed savage hesitated for a time, then he took the older of the two wives out with him one day in his canoe, and she never came back.

Now I cannot attest this story from my own knowledge of the parties, but it was current at the time, and on recently (1887) referring to my friend, Dr. John Rae,⁶ he said it was quite familiar to him, and, as he believed, true, though he too had no proof.

*See a letter of mine, signed "L.," *Athenæum*, 4th February, 1854. Also, "Pétitots Dictionaire Dini Dingie," and my geographical address, British Association, 1880.

⁵The Rev. James Evans (1801-46), General Superintendent of the North West Indian missions of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada from 1840 to 1846. See the Rev. E. R. Young, *The Apostle of the North* (New York, 1899), and N. Burwash, "The Gift to a Nation of Written Language" (*Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1911). Lefroy's account of Evans's departure from the Northwest does not take into account all the facts. A fuller account will be found in the *Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service*, vol. II (London, 1849), by John McLean, who was Evans's son-in-law.

⁶Dr. John Rae (1813-93) was from 1835 to 1845 resident surgeon at Moose Factory, and later played a prominent part in the land expeditions in search of Sir John Franklin.

I should have mentioned that the interpreter who he so unfortunately shot was not a Cree but a half-bred Chipewyan, named Hassell, a most promising young man.

I equipped myself at Norway House for the coming winter by providing a warm *capote* of thick white duffle, trimmed with red, and with a blue hood, also for Corporal Henry a grey one, with a few other necessities, including tea, 18 lbs., loaf sugar, 160 lbs., etc. I left, as a reserve for next year, 6 lbs. of tea and 80 lbs. of sugar.

Here I lost my Indian guide Laurent, and got in exchange a French-Canadian named Blondin, reputed the best *voyageur* in the country, and the only man available who could find his way back; but he proved a lazy, shiftless fellow.

Leaving Norway House at 3.30 A.M. on the 12th August, we coasted round the north end of the lake, and reached the mouth of the Saskatchewan early on the 15th. The river here is very rapid, and about five miles up, at what is termed the Grand Rapids, it is generally necessary to make, as we did, a portage of a mile.

Great was my pleasure and surprise on reaching the further end of it to find my friend John Maclean and his brigade of boats snugly encamped there. They had preceded me to York Factory, and had left Norway House before my arrival, and here they were wind-bound on the edge of a small expanse in the stream, in company with the Columbia brigade, bound for the Rocky Mountains. Seven or eight white tents were spread in picturesque confusion on the bank, keeping well in view piles of bales, boxes, barrels, and miscellaneous stores ready to be loaded into the boats. Behind them were a number of Indian lodges, and all around a motley crowd of *voyageurs*, emigrants with their families going to the Columbia, half-breeds, Indians, squaws in their blanket robes, gaunt dogs and children. It resembled a fair, doubly interesting because unexpected.

I pitched my tent near the others, and lay nearly all night listening to the monotonous drumming and sing-song of the Indians as they played their favourite gambling game, which resembles the "mora" of the Italian peasantry. They played also another equally noisy game, which consists in passing from hand to hand some small objects like knuckle bones (*dibs*). One side is, of course, intent on hiding the object, the other on declaring where it is. The song is always on one note, but the note varies, and the tone is rapidly changed, as failure, or hope, or triumph predominate. And then the loser and the winner change places, and the former begins to sing or drum and rattle sticks, until he gets another innings. At this simple game they will gamble away everything they possess, down to their wives.

Towards evening of the 17th August word was passed that the wind had gone down, and the whole camp broke up, every boat and canoe vying with the others which should be off first. I got the lead, and paddled on until nightfall, when we had much difficulty in finding a place to land. We slept *à la belle Étoile*, on a dry spot in the middle of extensive swamps, which give the neighbourhood the character of an inland delta. There was not room for a tent, or to discharge the canoe, which is invariably done at night, unless there is some very good reason for omitting it, not only for the sake of the shelter afforded by the canoe itself, but to enable any little leaks or cracks in the birch-bark to be attended to.

Fifty or sixty miles from here we reached on the afternoon of August 20th, the newly-founded Church of England missionary station, called "the Pas," then in charge of a young half-breed Cree catechist, named Budd, who had been educated at the Church school at the Red River. This establishment owed its origin to an Indian massacre a good many years previously, when the wife and family of a trader,⁷ who then resided here, were, in his absence, all murdered. He took the noble revenge of leaving, at his death, all his fortune to found a mission among the Indians. The will was, if I remember right, disputed, and much of the money wasted in litigation; but ultimately his intention prevailed. There was already a small, permanent Indian settlement, and Budd was not long afterwards replaced by an ordained clergyman. At a later date he was ordained himself. He conducted me round the place with much intelligence.

The Wesleyan superintendent, —, had occasionally visited the station, and baptized some of the Indians; but H—, a fossilized old chaplain at Red River, got wind of this, and came and re-baptized the whole of them, to the number of eighty, telling them that what — had done was of no effect. Such are, or I hope one may say were, the sad consequences of sectarian rivalry in these regions.

At the time I write of no bishop had ever visited Red River. It was the next year (1844) that the venerable Bishop of Quebec⁸ made the journey, and thrilled a sympathetic circle with the tale of his episcopal hardships. It was a brave effort for a man advanced in years, and his narrative is still well worth reading.

Between the Pas and Cumberland House, which I reached on the 22nd August, there was nothing of interest. Here I found myself on historical ground, some of the officers of both Franklin's expeditions having wintered here, and left full descriptions of the place and of its winter sports. As happened at several other places, the factor in charge was away.

It was harvest time, and I took no little interest in a field of wheat just cut, the firstfruits of the land, and the precursor of the boundless harvests which thirty years later began to flow into British granaries from this region. Nobody then thought that it ever could be an agricultural country, any more than they looked for the extermination of the buffaloes, then so numerous. The frequency of summer frosts was the reason commonly given, and the consequent precariousness of all dependence upon cultivation, although it might be very useful as an auxiliary. At the bottom of the belief there worked, I fear, an apprehension that it would be fatal to the fur trade, which it has not been.

Being very anxious to push on I made no longer stay at Cumberland House than was necessary for my observations, and got off on the afternoon of the 24th, though to little purpose. It was blowing too hard to proceed beyond a couple of miles, but I was glad to set my head northwards.

We reached the Hudson's Bay establishment on lake "À la Crosse" on the 9th September, and stayed there until noon on 11th. The trader was away. I recollect a little incident which impressed me a good deal at the time. The 10th was, I think, Sunday. I strolled out in the afternoon into the clearing

⁷James Leith (1777-1838), a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and formerly a partner of the XY and North West Companies.

⁸The Right Rev. George Jehoshaphat Mountain (1789-1863), Bishop of Quebec from 1837 to 1863. See his *Songs of the Wilderness* (London, 1846).

round the fort, which was uncultivated and covered with second growth. The weather being very sultry, and I, as usual, pretty tired, I sank down after a time in a lazy way on a hummock of soft, dry sphagnum, and dozed off. I was aroused, however, by the sweep of powerful wings, and collecting my senses I saw circling near me a couple of ravens that had been endeavouring to satisfy themselves whether I was dead or not. A little sounder sleep, and another swoop or two, and probably one of my eyes would have gone.

I left "Isle à la Crosse" on the 11th September. The pleasures of travelling were already somewhat on the wane. The days were getting short and the nights cold, though we were only in the latitude of Stirlingshire, and we had very constant rain. "I ate my breakfast with a plate half full of water and my tea well cooled," is a note of one day. The scenery, however, on the Churchill, improves a good deal as one advances, the country begins to get hilly, and the countless flights of wild fowl, winging their way to milder climes, were a never-ceasing interest. It was scarcely possible to raise one's eyes to any quarter of the sky at any hour of the day without seeing long streams of them. I was not a good shot, but nevertheless picked up a good many. Blondin, the guide, also had a gun, and was very fond of using it. The birds were a most acceptable change from the pemmican which, after leaving Cumberland House, became our staple provision. The portages also abounded with wild berries, raspberries, gooseberries, currants (very poor), cranberries, whortleberries, and, best of all, "poires." This last is almost unknown in England, though I once saw a fine tree growing at Sir Gordon Cumming's, in Scotland. It is the *Amelanchien ovalis*. The fruit, which gets its name from its resemblance to a pear in shape, is nearly as large as a wild cherry, and is really delicious to wayfarers. It is sometimes also called "Bois de flèche," making the best arrows, and is used as well for pipe stems.

A little misadventure on the Methy River a day or two after leaving the fort gave me a caution. Being a very shallow stream at this season, it was frequently necessary to lighten the canoe, and on one of these occasions I got out to walk, and somehow received the impression that the canoe had passed me, mistaking the tracks of some animals here and there through the reeds for those of some of the men who were also walking. It was excessively hot, but I pressed on through a most entangled and difficult thicket, sometimes wading the stream, then plunging again into the bushes until the sun set. I then concluded I should have to pass the night there. I had neither flint nor steel nor tinder, but I had some percussion caps, and after several failures managed to explode one of them on the ward of a large key, and to light some dry birch-bark. I soon had a cheerful fire, and was congratulating myself on my success, when I heard a gun fired behind me and the shouting of the men. I had outstripped them, and was not a little glad when they came up and I felt sure of some supper. Perhaps my assistant should have followed me, only I must acknowledge that I did not make a companion of Corporal Henry. The distance which separates the officer and soldier is great, and in character he was taciturn, without a particle of vivacity, making a grievance where he could, looking with contempt on the Canadians, with whom he never associated more than he could help, and on their language, of which he hardly learnt a word except "shudder" for *chaudière*, kettle, and such-like. He was also unsociable and uncommunicative to the last degree, and I scarcely ever saw him unbend or take any part in the occasional practical jokes which the Canadians indulged in, or show a warm

interest in anything; yet he was very faithful and useful as an assistant and soldier-servant, and had I been differently constituted myself I might no doubt have drawn more out of him.

Corporal W. Henry eventually rose to be sergeant-major, then was commissioned as adjutant in the first transport corps organized for the Crimean war, and finally retired from the service in 1877, with the rank of colonel. He died in 1881.

We had one pretty long portage of three and a half miles on the Methy River, and on 16th September reached what is pre-eminently called the "Great Methy Portage" of twelve miles, which must be passed before launching upon the streams which flow into the Arctic Sea. Here the Hudson's Bay Company have a road and keep horses, and I doubt not, though I don't remember it, some sort of wheeled carriages, without which we certainly could not have made the passage as we did in one day.

Nobody whose eyes have ever dwelt on the lovely view which meets them at the north end of this portage can ever forget it.

There is the valley of the "Clearwater," 634 feet below (Richardson) stretching for thirty miles towards the setting sun, its bounding hills on both sides rising at first in gentle and then in steeper slopes, and clothed to their summits with virgin forests, at this time in all their autumnal beauty; on the western side these hills are called the Touchwood Mountains. Down the centre of this valley the silver river, sometimes cut off by a bend, but soon reappearing, pursues a westerly course, attenuated to a silvery thread as it recedes from view. Columns of blue smoke here and there marked where the Indians had carelessly set the woods on fire. I would gladly have lingered here for some time, but the sun was near the horizon, and we had a steep and somewhat dangerous descent to make. Indeed, one of our men, Cardan, got badly hurt, and it was a wonder to me how such a heavy, clumsy thing as a canoe could be carried down at all; however, we reached the bottom without serious accident, and we lost no time in making our camp for the night.

There is probably no spot in the north-west which has so many romantic associations connected with it as this camp on the "Clearwater." Here once a year, usually about 15th July, the North and South shake hands. For three months previously boats and barges, rarely canoes, have been patiently wending their way up stream, from the remotest north on one side and from Hudson's Bay on the other, to meet here and exchange freights. The former bring the furs, reindeer tongues and meat, and sometimes also passengers from the Peel River, the Mackenzie, the Liard, Great Slave Lake, Lake Athabasca and Peace River stations, some of them 1,300 miles distant. The latter bring the recruits, officers and men, destined to this Siberian banishment, the goods for trade, the clothing and comforts, such as tea and sugar and other groceries for all the posts from the distant depôts of York Factory and Norway House. Both parties are under stress of time; and unavoidable accidents or detentions sometimes prevent their arriving together. Thus, in 1850 Dr. Rae arrived from the north a week earlier than the brigade from the south, and his men would have been half-starved had he not brought nets with him, and for the first time on record set them in one of the lakes with good success.

The brigades of boats were usually seven or eight in number, generally manned by eight hands each, and of these a large proportion were Indians; the Company preferred to employ them—first, because it kept them from hunting

fur-bearing animals in the summer, and secondly, because they thus earned enough to provide themselves with an outfit against the winter.

It is hardly necessary to say that the two brigades do not actually rendezvous at the same spot; each waits at its own end of the portage while its freight is carried over by the crews, a work of great exertion even when assisted by pack-horses; and all parties were usually too fatigued to make it an occasion of much social enjoyment, nor was there a local population to give the character of a fair to the meeting, though a good many Indians are attracted by the chance of picking up something. All this is now a thing of the past. Steam has been introduced on Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan, and is about to be (1888) on Slave Lake and the Mackenzie.

At the earliest possible moment the two parties turn their backs on each other; they vanish as they came—the one pressed to supply the remote northern posts before the navigation closes, the other pressed to get back to York Factory with the furs for export in time for them to be examined and dried and repacked before the return of the annual vessel to England, after which they had still to carry a return freight to Norway House and Red River; but the opening of the Canada Pacific Railway has now altered all these arrangements.

To return to the Clearwater River. We slept there on the night of September 16th,* which was brilliantly clear and frosty, the stars like diamonds. I had as usual turned in after taking off my moccasins and socks, sleeping in my shirt-sleeves and trousers. I was roused, however, by a subdued growling and scratching at my bed-head, and had just time to see the bag of biscuit, which for its security I used as a pillow, disappear under the tent. I sprang up instantly, and saw an Indian dog bolting with it. Of course I gave chase, and after a good run made him drop it; but alas! I was barefooted, the stones were sharp and covered with frost, and I limped back much less triumphant than the occasion justified; but an act which would be fatal to me now had no ill consequences.

We left very early next morning in good spirits. We had crossed the Great Portage, and were entitled to call ourselves *voyageurs*. Previous to this we were but novices; "*Mangeurs de lard*" is the expression applied to all young hands. We were also nearing our journey's end and going down stream, having been struggling up stream for a month.

There are a few portages on the "Clearwater," and one morning about 5 A.M., shortly after starting, we saw three moose deer cross the stream not far ahead. I had a couple of Indians on board, one of whom was called the "Man Eater," probably for some act of cannibalism committed in the terrible famine of 1842; these were landed as quietly as possible, but the animals had no doubt seen us. The men returned in a short time without having found the trail.

We entered the "Elk" or "Athabasca" River, a fine stream, on the 19th; from thence it was a run of only 150 miles to Lake Athabasca, which we crossed on 23rd September, and reached Fort Chipewyan about noon on that day.

It was a pretty sight, the crossing of the lake; the men, in their gala attire, singing lustily their favourite songs, paddling with a spirit not often elicited. The whole population turned out to meet and welcome us.

Mine was the first canoe that had arrived from Montreal for twelve years.

*Dawson, on his return voyage, 1883, reached this portage on 4th October, and found the small streams frozen.

We were the heroes of the hour, and pardonably proud of the completion of a voyage of about 3,600 miles; while to me the interest was great of seeing the spot destined to become familiar by a residence of nearly six months.

Mr. Colin Campbell,⁹ the chief trader in charge, had had no intimation of my visit, and consequently no preparations had been made, but in a few hours we settled down; and food being abundant at this post, the addition of eight mouths created no serious embarrassment. The men, however, after a few days' rest and recreation, were sent off to a fishing station, and supported themselves.

Fort Chipewyan was a square palisaded enclosure of mean appearance, with a sort of tower at each angle. The total population was about thirty-five. Having been the principal depôt of the North-West Company, there were numerous one-storied log cabins round three sides of it. The trader's residence, facing south, occupied the north side, and looked upon a number of well-wooded islands about half a mile distant. A vacant hut to the east of the dwelling was given up to me for an observatory. My men built a chimney, and, with the help of a half-breed carpenter, put in three small windows, the lower half of each being of parchment, and erected pedestals for the instruments. All this took nearly three weeks, so that I was not ready to begin taking observations before 15th October, after which date they were made hourly, day and night, by Corporal Henry and myself, and on all occasions of magnetic disturbance at intervals of about two minutes, for hours together. I do not wish to lay too much stress on this effort, but as Sabine never gave me any credit for it, I must just remark that I know of no other instance of like exertion. Riddle,¹⁰ writing to my mother before my return, said: "Your son has done wonders in the way of observing, having kept up *hourly* observations for about six months, with only one assistant—a quantity no one could in the least have looked for, but which will be well worth the labour now it is done."

Notwithstanding our fireplace, we had often very cold fingers. On 22nd January the indoors temperature was 1.2° Fahr. below zero. Mercury was freezing out of doors.

The season, nevertheless, was unusually mild, and at my first arrival there were still a few ducks and geese to be had. When there was nothing particular going on among the magnets, I often spent my "watch below," as a sailor would call it, in looking after them, in company with Dyke Bouchier, Mr. Campbell's assistant; he was one of the young men who came out with me, and of the whole party, the one I liked best. We tried also sometimes to trap foxes and other animals, but never succeeded. It is common to say that the fox smells iron; certainly their cunning, which enables them often to secure the bait without springing the trap, is beyond belief. Later on we used to shoot grouse, of which there were four or five kinds fairly abundant in the woods. They all became "white partridges" sooner or later, and were so pretty that I had compunctions as to killing them.

Before the winter set in I had an opportunity of witnessing an Indian sweating bath. In this curious custom, which is partly sanitary and partly

⁹Colin Campbell (1787-1853), a chief trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had been a clerk in the service of the North West Company. For some account of his life, see J. N. Wallace, *The Wintering Partners on Peace River* (Ottawa, 1929).

¹⁰Edward Riddle (1788-1854), English mathematician and astronomer.

ceremonial or religious, the Crees construct a small lodge, and heat it to an intolerable temperature by throwing water on hot stones. On entering it they strip off all clothing, and then remain drumming and chanting long addresses to the "Great Spirit," for success in their winter hunt, as long as they can stand it. Two men and a woman were the performers. I handed in a thermometer to one of them, and on handing it out, although the mercury, by sudden contact with the external air, dropped almost too fast to be read, I made it over 140° Fahr.; I should think it must have been up to 170° or 180° inside. A minute or two afterwards they suddenly threw off the covering of the lodge, and exposed themselves, naked but huddling on their clothes, to a freezing temperature.

They have a playful practice of blowing the scalding air and steam on to one another's naked bodies, as a little trial of endurance. The general impression seemed to be that they derived benefit from the bath, as Russian peasants do from a very similar institution. I did not see any rolling in the snow, but I believe it is sometimes done.

We lived principally upon whitefish (*Coregonus albus**), a special provision of nature for man in these regions, varied frequently by buffalo-meat and moose, the latter the finest venison I know. We had a few potatoes occasionally, and usually one very small *galette* or scone; this was all the flour afforded. Pemmican is reserved for travelling. I witnessed the preparation of pemmican. A quantity of smoke-dried buffalo-meat was reduced to shreds by pounding it upon a flat stone; then a few of the most obvious bits of gristle having been picked out, the rest was thrown into a trough; to this was added an equal weight of melted buffalo tallow, and the two well stirred together with a rake. When thoroughly mixed, it was shovelled into a bag made of buffalo hide, which would contain about ninety pounds.

Pemmican thus prepared is a hearty sustaining food, not unpalatable to people with good teeth and good digestion. About three pounds a day is the allowance; it requires no cooking, though I have seen attempts made to boil it with flour, which did not improve it. It is then called "rabbaboo."

There were the remains of a library in a loft at the fort, which Dyke Bouchier and I rummaged up. I remember the Abbé B——'s "Illuminati" was a book I read, and, I think, Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History"; but our great resource in the long evenings was playing chess, with a set of men carved out of poplar bark. Mr. Campbell placidly smoked his pipe, was not unwilling to talk, and taught us a little "Cree."

We had our festivities on Christmas Day, and drank a bottle of Madeira I had brought all the way from Montreal. New Year's Day, however, not Christmas Day, is everywhere the great holiday of the year. We were joined on this occasion by Mr. McMurray,¹¹ who had walked on snow-shoes about 200 miles for his holiday; thermometer 30° Fahr. part of the way. In a letter to my sister Sophia, dated 1st January, 1844, I wrote:

"I wish you *la bonne année*, as the Canadians say, and which according to custom every person in the fort came to wish me this morning. It is a great

**Coregonus clupeiformis* (Brown Goode).

¹¹William McMurray (d. 1877), afterwards a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, after whom Fort McMurray was named.

fête day, on which the gentlemen hold a kind of *levée* in the morning and give a dance in the evening; for the latter I hear the fiddle tuning while I write. It is in fact the one holiday of the year for young and old. A separate reception or drawing-room is held for the ladies, at which a laudable custom exists of giving them a kiss in wishing them *la bonne année*. This old-fashioned salute is general in the country on other ceremonial occasions. I went manfully round the circle, including two or three old squaws, whose only attraction was a clean face; but to estimate the force of that you should see their everyday one! After this they have a *régale*, of which one item is a glass of wine, if there is any.

"Our ball went off with great *éclat*. Many of the Canadian dances are pretty, particularly one called the *Chasse aux Lièvres*. There is also another worthy of being known. It is a round dance, in which the dancers join hands and dance round in a ring, one of them singing:

'De ma main droite
Je tiens Rosalie,
Belle Rosalie!

Qui porte la fleur
Dans le mois de mai,
Belle Rosalie!

Embrassez qui vous voudrez
Car j'aurai la moitié.'

At the last two lines the singer puts the lady on his right into the circle and they dance round her. At the first pause she gives a kiss to someone (be it observed that this is done with the greatest decorum and modesty), then she enters the ring again to the left of the singer and the dance goes on. When a man is put in he is *Beau Rose*.

"The *voyageurs* if they see a gentleman not dancing will come to him. 'Ah, monsieur, ne voulez vous pas danser et avec cette dame icit!' handing to you the lady who has just stood up with him. The lady takes it as a high compliment. We mustered about six or eight women to three times as many men. They enjoyed themselves to about 1 A.M. to an old fiddle and an Indian drum; Corporal Henry exhibited some astonishing steps. . . ."

I should have mentioned that earlier in the month of December we had some very interesting visitors. These were a party of nearly forty of the wildest tribe of Chipewyans known as the cariboo hunters. They inhabit the barren grounds north of the Great Slave Lake, and rarely come to the trading posts. These people, men, women and children, were wholly clad in reindeer skins, and of course were warmly and sufficiently clad; they carried bows and arrows. Anthropology as a science was not then invented, and Ethnology was in its infancy. I did not take nearly notice enough of these children of nature, but I measured the stature of them all, much to their trepidation. The men averaged 5 feet 5½ inches. Although our interpreter spoke their dialect, which was in fact the language of our own Chipewyans, I did not question them, and have often been ashamed since at not having made more of the opportunity. They stayed a day or two, and then departed to their frozen country.

The month of January, 1844, was the coldest of the winter. It is not quite

settled at what temperature mercury freezes; Regnault made it as low as 40.9° Fahr. Professor D. Forbes in 1851 says: "There can be no possible harm in defining freezing mercury to be at 40° Fahr." Balfour Stewart in 1863 brought it as high as 37.9° Fahr. ("Phil. Trans." 1863). Meanwhile, there is no question of the fact that mercury did freeze, and was frozen at forty or fifty hourly readings during the month, and I amused myself by casting bullets and the like. It was necessary to cover the eye-pieces of my sextant with leather, and to be very careful not to touch objects of metal. However, I did not suffer, and on the coldest days went out on my snow-shoes, very lightly clad according to modern ideas, to shoot grouse.

The month of February was 27.8° warmer than January, of course an exceptional difference; and with it came to an end my residence at Fort Chipewyan, which I left on 5th March.

The social and religious condition of the Chipewyan Indians has been wonderfully improved by the foundation of a Bishopric of Athabasca and Mackenzie River, but at the time of my visit it was lamentable to hear stories of their anxiety for instruction in Christianity and the arts of civilization, which there was no man to give them. This tribe, or rather race—for all the northern Indians speak dialects of the same language, and are quite distinct from those of the south—has always been distinguished for its bias towards civilized life. They were the first to adopt agriculture and build themselves houses. They were formerly notorious for brutal treatment of their women, which was partly accounted for by the exceptional stubbornness of the fair sex, so much so that it was a common remark that nobody but a Chipewyan man could manage a Chipewyan woman, but I fancy time has softened both sides. I did not hear much of this.

Writing to my brother Anthony, 1st December, I said:

"The state of the case is this. By far the greater part of the whites in this country are Roman Catholics—namely, almost all the servants and labourers in the Company's employment; of the officers the greater part are probably professedly Presbyterians, but not of a rigid stamp. They would prefer a Church of England missionary to any other. The Indians know nothing of the Gospel, but are anxiously desirous (at least the Chipewyan and Beaver Indians) of instruction. The half-breeds, the women and children born and bred at the forts, may profess one or other persuasion, but they know nothing of either, and would at once follow any missionary who might come among them. It is interesting, in the midst of this deep religious destitution, to hear anecdotes of the natural craving of man after some religion. I met a half-breed, a man with a large family, from Edmonton, who expressed his joy that a missionary had come there at last, alluding to a Wesleyan who preceded the Roman Catholic priest, and pointed to his children to explain his interest in the subject. Mr. Colin Campbell, the resident trader here, was formerly among the Beaver Indians. They would sometimes say to him, 'You are at leisure now; sit down and tell us of the Master of Life, and how we may become good livers.' An old Chipewyan the other day, who had heard something of the sacredness of the Sabbath, was telling him how he kept it himself, and as to the difficulty he had in keeping his children from playing on that day. I have been surprised to hear that the Indians in many instances observe the Lord's Day, knowing so little of religion. Probably they do so on superstitious grounds; but it shows a readiness to receive instruction, and indeed of all the Indian tribes the Chipe-

wyans are from their character the most hopeful subjects of experiment. They are remarkably cautious and provident, a timid race of men, very acute for their own interests, and rather better off than their neighbours. The tribes speaking the same or cognate languages number at this time about 7,500 souls, but unluckily their language is exceedingly difficult. They mostly, however, speak Cree, which is very easy, and there are plenty of interpreters to be found."

I left Fort Chipewyan, as already noted, on the 5th March. Out of some fifty or sixty powerful dogs maintained there for purposes of transport, three of the best were selected for my "cariole"—Papillon, Milord and Cartouche; two other teams drew the sleighs which carried my instruments, baggage, bedding, provisions and stores, each load about three hundredweight; there was a driver to each sleigh besides the guide. It was a cold, bright day, and we started with spirit, dogs barking, whips cracking, men running on their snow-shoes. This soon came down to a most sober gait. I had quite a narrow escape from losing my eyes a very few miles from the fort; the path gave a sudden turn, and only by an intuitive dodge I escaped a young fallen spruce fir that was charging a hundred bayonets down the road just at the level of my face. The first day's journey made it abundantly evident that Corporal Henry was quite unfit for the journey; he had scarcely ever taken snow-shoe exercise and got the *mal-de-raquette*. The second day I gave up the cariote to him, and we managed to get him along. In a few days he accustomed himself to snow-shoes sufficiently to walk occasionally, but proved a poor traveller. I took a turn every now and then, but it was so bitterly cold in the narrow, coffin-like carriage that I preferred walking. Our track lay along the bed of the Slave River, which we did not often leave. I here saw for the first time the great plasticity of ice. The ice in the centre of the stream was sunk many feet below that at the banks, and often moulded itself to the bottom and showed every shoal. We had capital sheltered encampments generally.

I have said that the cariote was bitterly cold, and have a vivid recollection of getting out of it with the sensation of being frozen to the marrow; but this must have been an exceptionally cold day, for I find that I reported the contrary to my mother.

I wore a chamois-leather shirt and drawers over woollen ones, and a coat or *capot* of blanket with a hood to draw over the head, blanket, socks, and of course moccasins, which are both put on dry every night, this is most important to avoid frost bite. I was sometimes prevented from sleeping at night by cold, but the men, who lie in a heap, rarely complained of it. They take it in turn which shall turn out first in the morning to make up the fire, the rest lie snug until they hear it blazing.

Two nights are much impressed on me, one when we encamped on a small naked island of rock on Great Slave Lake. It was intensely cold and near full moon. McMurray was then travelling with me, and we lay down to sleep side by side. I slept at that time in a bag made of one blanket, and with a second over me. Again and again I woke half frozen to find that McMurray in his sleep, by persistent wriggling, had got all my blanket from me and wrapped well round himself. Then came a tug and a struggle until I repossessed myself of it, only to repeat the same process after an hour or two. The other occasion was one of unusual comfort and prolonged sleep, which I found to be due to a light fall of snow having buried the whole encampment. I was often warmed

by Papillon, my biggest dog, worming himself under my blanket and stretching his body by my side.

Very amusing scenes often took place in the morning in catching and harnessing up the dogs. No one but Landseer could depict the expression of profound dejection, dismay and finally resignation which their countenances assumed when called up. At the first outcry, "L'Anglois! Papillon! icit avance, avance donc L'Anglois!" some put their tails between their legs and sneak in a guilty manner away, some pretend not to hear, some bury themselves in the snow or hide behind trees. Woe to the dog that obliges himself to be fetched. At last they are all got together in their respective teams, and we leave the well-sheltered encampment with considerable reluctance, to take to the ice. The dogs do an astonishing amount of work, but differ in strength and spirit quite as much as horses. They are fed at night. More than once when we reached the spot where a supply of frozen fish had been *câched* there was not a scrap; a wolverine or perhaps a starving family of Indians had been beforehand. In such cases the dogs get nothing till next evening; nothing is thought of leaving dogs unfed for a week or more, and when not in work they live upon such scraps as they can pick up about a fort. They are too valuable to be allowed actually to die of starvation if there is any food at all to be had; short of that they take their chance.

I remember very well a remarkable atmospheric effect which helped us across Great Slave Lake. As we started from the southern shore we saw plainly before us Pointe Brulé on the northern shore, forty miles distant, lifted by unusual refraction above the horizon; it was sharp and distinct, but after we had walked towards it some miles the conditions changed and it completely disappeared, nor did we see it again until we neared it. This must have been the night of my little experience of sleeping in a bag, but I cannot identify the island.

We had some very mild weather during this March. For instance, on 23rd March the temperature at daybreak was 35° Fahr., and on 25th at the same hour, 41° Fahr.

I reached Fort Simpson on Mackenzie River on 26th March, after nineteen marching days, deducting stoppages, making an average of a little more than twenty-four miles a day.

I had pleasure in being again greeted at Fort Simpson by my friend John McLean, who was second officer of the fort. The first was a Mr. Lewis,¹² who had had the misfortune to blow his right hand off some months previously, and was in consequence going home. It was a terrible accident to happen far from surgical aid, but he had as an assistant a young fellow of nerve and decision, named, I think, Pears, who tried to dress the stump. To stop the bleeding he tied up every vein and artery he could get at; he then bathed the wound with a decoction of epinette, which is much used in the country for external applications; and, although much reduced by loss of blood, Lewis's strength of constitution enabled him to gradually recover. His chief suffering at this time was from cold, to guard against which he wore a sheath of warm fur up to the elbow. On the other hand, he entirely lost his neuralgia, from which he had suffered much before the accident.

¹²John Lee Lewes (b. 1791), who was made a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company about 1828, retired in 1853, and died at St. Andrew's, Man.

I may as well add that when he got surgical advice at home, the decision was not to disturb the cure. The stump was not reamputated.

Mr. Lewis bore a considerable resemblance to the Duke of Sussex, and was proud of relating how often he had been taken for him on a previous visit to England. His wife, who was half Indian, always honoured us by appearing at meals, and was nearly the only half-breed lady I ever knew to do so.

My life at Fort Simpson was greatly influenced by the advance of spring, which, before I left, confused day and night to such a degree that there never seemed to be any proper time either for going to bed or for rising; while the rapid burst of vegetation in May gave everyone a restless desire to be out of doors. Mrs. Lewis and her children were all day snaring birds, rabbits, and small animals. 3 A.M. generally found me with my gun trying to get a wild-duck or two off a small pond there was near the observatory. The fort being on an island, cut off from the mainland in rear by a rather broad channel, my walks were circumscribed. I was greatly interested in finding quite large pine timber, a few cattle, and a productive farm of thirteen acres, where they grew barley and potatoes. But provisions were not very abundant, and the bulk of the population subsisted chiefly on rabbits. I believe wheat is now grown, as it was even then at Fort Liard, about 160 miles to the south; and had agriculture entered into the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, there need have been little want in the country. As it was, there had been great scarcity for three or four years, and a frightful famine only the previous winter, accompanied by numerous acts of cannibalism. The Hare Indian woman who washed for me, known as the "*Femme du Diable*," was protected from her husband at the fort, because he had killed and eaten one or two other wives. Some starving women, who had already eaten their husbands, fell upon two Scotchmen who were carrying a mail, killed them as they lay asleep, and devoured them. They told me at Fort Good Hope that the scenes enacted just outside their palisades were harrowing. The cause of it all was the failure of rabbits from some epidemic, and of reindeer, due to the senseless folly of the Indians. In the spring of 1839 or 1840 there was unusually deep snow, and the animals lay at the mercy of the Indians, and could not escape; yet no argument or entreaty could make the Indians refrain from killing young and old alike. An Indian cannot stay his hand, no matter whether he wants food or no. Precisely the same thing occurred about the same time near York Factory, and the reindeer forsook the country for several years.

The Hare Indians, a branch of the Chipewyan family who inhabit the country round Fort Simpson, were honourably distinguished from other tribes by their better treatment of women, and by the men taking their full share of all household labours and duties. Another branch of the same large family in New Caledonia has the singular custom of requiring the survivor of a married couple, be it husband or wife, to go through an ordeal not unlike the "suttee," that is, to be burnt upon the dead body, only not to death. Since my time, however, the language, mythology, and customs of these races have been much better investigated, though I know of no good English book about them. The best is by the Abbé Petitot, in French.¹³

I carried on hourly observations as assiduously at Fort Simpson as I had

¹³The reference is probably to the Abbé Emile Petitot, *Monographie des Déné-Dindjié* (Paris, 1876).

done at Fort Chipewyan, and was much puzzled by the immensely greater range of variation of all the magnetic elements. Subsequent observations continued at Fort Rae (Dawson, 1882-3) have shown that as the season advances and the sun is above the horizon a greater number of hours, the diurnal movements towards the summer solstice are about twice as great as at the winter solstice.

The ice in Mackenzie River broke up on 25th May, and within a very few hours we were all afloat. This annual phenomenon had often been described to me as one of the grandest in nature, but whether it occurred at night, or was unusually quietly done, for some cause it did not make a great impression upon me. The ice was about three feet thick, and huge blocks were thrown upon the shore in every direction. We were only four days in descending, with a strong current, to Fort Good Hope, my most northerly point, and made but one stop for a few hours, at Fort Norman, by the way. I was enabled to land, however, to inspect more closely a great landslide that had recently occurred at Gros Cap, in latitude 64° , near the fort.

Fort Good Hope was marked on Arrowsmith's map as just within the Arctic circle; to my disappointment it had since been moved about two degrees to the south, and was now placed in latitude $66^{\circ} 16'$. We arrived there on the 29th May, and stayed thirty hours. The weather was cloudy, but not unfavourable for magnetical observations, and it was as light at midnight as at noon. Here I got my greatest dip, $82^{\circ} 55' 9''$, and it was here, as I have already mentioned, that the famine of 1842-3 was felt in its greatest intensity.

We started southwards again on the 31st May, with a strong northerly wind and in a blinding snowstorm, which accompanied us nearly to Fort Simpson. We put ashore once a day to boil the kettle, but only halted at Fort Norman. In these latitudes, where there is scarcely any variation in the light through the twenty-four hours, it is impossible after a day or two of cloudy weather to guess the time of day. I had a proof of this in an inquiry of our steersman what o'clock it was. I told him about five o'clock. "Bien, monsieur," said he, "cinq heures de demain matin ou cinq heures d'hier au soir?"

M. Dechambault,¹⁴ the trader at Fort Norman, was rather an interesting person. He was said to be a man of good private fortune, the owner of a *seigneurie* worth £700 a year in Lower Canada, but for the pleasure perhaps of saving money or for the charms of solitude and perfect freedom, he remained on year after year in this Siberian banishment and was quite contented. The soil in his garden thawed about fourteen inches in the summer, and he could grow a little barley and very small potatoes.

At Fort Good Hope, by the bye, they could only, as they said, grow turnips.

We made an unusually rapid passage, and reached Fort Simpson again on the 5th June. I did not resume hourly observations, as it was uncertain from day to day when I should have to leave, but I repeated the determination of magnetic intensity, obtaining very nearly the same result as before.

We left on June 15th, in two or three barges under MacLean. The current was so strong that our progress was slow and chiefly by tracking, employing a good number of Indians. I seldom had an opportunity of landing for observation.

We reached Fort Resolution on Great Slave Lake on 22nd. Here I found my canoe and crew, and took leave of the brigade to follow the same route as

¹⁴George Fleury Deschambault (d. 1870), a clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company's service.

that by which I had arrived at the same station in March. Very different, however, were the conditions. The spots where we had camped in the snow and shivered over the fires were hardly to be recognized in their midsummer verdure. I remember the odd appearance in one place of a dozen or two of small brown owls blinking in the sunshine, and the terror of Baptiste Ayot; the Sancho Panza of the crew, when one of them suddenly gripped his leg, "Il m'a poigné, il m'a poigné, oh! oh!"

On the afternoon of the 25th June we reached the Portage de Grande Détour, and while I stayed behind at the landing to make my observations, the men started across with their loads and met with an adventure. The track crosses a prairie, which was evidently at no remote period the bed of a small lake; the two foremost, who were a long way ahead of the rest, had reached the middle of this prairie before they perceived a brown bear making straight for them. They halted and set down their loads, shouting and doing what they could to frighten him, but Bruin took no notice of their noise, and was drawing disagreeably near, when a third man came up; this was Blondin the guide, who had a gun. He joined his two affrighted comrades and let the bear, who still came on, approach to about ten yards; then he turned a little and Blondin fired and killed him. Corporal Henry and I did not join the party until it was over, when we helped to eat some of him, but my impressions of bear meat are not in its favour.

It took us two days to carry the canoe and baggage across this portage. We re-embarked on Salt River, a small stream flowing into Slave River, on the 27th, and finally arrived at Fort Chipewyan on the 30th June. It was very pleasant to see again in summer verdure a place I knew so well in its winter garb.

I only remained long enough at Fort Chipewyan on this occasion to repeat my observations of last autumn, and left it on 4th July. I had made up my mind that it was possible to ascend Peace River as far as Dunvegan, cross the plains to Edmonton and reach Canada before the closing of navigation, and so indeed it proved, but it was a very close thing. This noble stream, one of the main arteries of the continent, and chief feeder of the Mackenzie, which takes its rise in the Rocky Mountains, was at this time almost unknown to geographical science, and I confess that a desire to be the first scientific traveller to visit it had much to do with my decision, and I took unusual pains to make a track survey as well as to describe its features from day to day. The unfortunate loss of my journals in 1846 deprived me of nearly all the fruit of this labour.

Peace River, although 5° or 6° of latitude north of the Saskatchewan, presents more luxuriant vegetation, and many of the characteristics of a milder climate. I cannot speak with statistical precision, not having at hand the observations made of late years, but I believe it has actually been found a more fertile region. Our progress was slow against the stream, but as there is only one portage at the Falls, and I was anxious to push on and could not afford long halts, I did not make many observations.

I found a genial, simple-minded trader in charge of Fort Vermillion, afterwards, I do not know when, renamed Fort Lefroy. He had a large family; one of his little girls said something to him in "Cree," and he turned to me with the inquiry, "Do you know what she said? 'I never loved a chief before, but I love him mah-ne-maga, above anything!'" showing an idyllic simplicity rare in this age.

Indians are not numerous on Peace River. They are a Chipewyan tribe, called the Beaver Indians by the traders, and held in great respect. I heard a touching anecdote of a poor mother who had lost her infant. In her wild despair and darkness she cut off her own breast, placed it on the cold lips of the child and hanged herself.

I reached Fort Dunvegan, my furthest point on this river, on 22nd July, and for the first time fixed its geographical position, which had fluctuated between longitude $7^{\circ} 30'$ W. and $8^{\circ} 52'$ W. Thirty-nine years afterwards, Mr. F. King, of the Dominion Survey, repeated the determination, and I take some satisfaction in his confirmation:

	(Latitude.)	(Longitude.)
Lefroy, 1844.....	$55^{\circ} 55' 36''$	$118^{\circ} 40' 45''$ W. (By Lunars.)
King, 1883.....	$55^{\circ} 55' 38''$	$118^{\circ} 36' 1''$ W.

I stayed here four days, one of which was kept as a term day. The trader was a brother of my companion at Fort Chippewyan, Mr. Dyke Bouchier; he was married to a half-breed Indian woman. Nothing could exceed their hospitality.

Peace River runs here in a deep narrow valley at a depth of 400 feet, which it has apparently cut for itself. The neighbourhood is well wooded, and was even then known to offer beds of coal, which I found cropping out on the side of a ravine; it was not of good quality. I expected to find the Rocky Mountains in view here, but such was not the case. The rise of the great plains towards the base of the mountains is so gradual that they are not seen until they are nearly approached.

We took our leave on 26th July, and I was much interested to see my men, each cap in hand, and with the manners of a courtier, respectfully approach Mrs. Bouchier and the other half-breed woman, and one after another bid these ladies farewell with a kiss.

Having to cross the plains to Edmonton, I left my canoe here, and crossed the river. A drove of half-wild horses were in waiting on the further side with a few Indians, half-breeds, and their wives, who wished to accompany us. These women all ride astride, and I was much struck with the comfort and perfect modesty of this arrangement. Saddles are unknown; the substitute is a cushion made of a number of small skins; the bridle is a cord round the animal's lower jaw.

Smoky River, which we crossed on the third day, takes its name from a solfatara higher up, which I visited at this spot, called "The Smokes." There are a number of crevices lined with small crystals of sulphur, which are always emitting smoke. It will doubtless at no distant day be a health resort. I saw no signs of volcanic activity. The small lakes in the neighbourhood are horribly impregnated with sulphuretted hydrogen. It rained all the time, and I was truly glad to get back to camp at a late hour after dark. Riding behind our Indian guides, I was much reminded of the moss troopers of the Scottish border as we pricked on without drawing bridle, or looking to see who followed, through swamps and thickets hour after hour.

We reached the fort on Lesser Slave Lake a little before noon on August 2nd. The gentleman in charge had had no notice of my coming, but fortunately there was no lack of provisions at the station, and he made us very welcome.

Here I stayed until the 5th, and fixed its geographical position, which was previously very uncertain.

The scenery about Lesser Slave Lake is uninteresting, but improves towards the eastern end, where the lake drains into the Athabasca River. I was very fortunate in finding a canoe at the fort, and in crossing the lake on the 6th we had the rare good fortune to overtake and kill a moose, which was swimming across it—one of whose great cleft hoofs I still possess. Some Indians appeared afterwards and claimed a share, as they declared they had driven it into the water. I do not doubt that this was true, and we acted liberally in giving them the greater part of it.

We reached Fort Assiniboine on the 10th, not making more than twenty miles progress a day against a very strong current. I have but an indistinct recollection of it. Here I found a young Wesleyan minister, named Rundle,¹⁵ who was waiting, with his interpreter, for an escort to Edmonton, and asked permission to join my party. A scene I can never forget was the crossing of this river, thus described in a letter to my sister Isabella:

"It is a tremendously rapid river. We passed over the baggage in a log canoe. Then we had to get the horses across—wild animals not backed for months; never shod or trimmed, tails, manes, and forelocks as wild as you can conceive. There was a steep bank which we drove them down, and one by one forced them to plunge in, some of them rearing, trembling, and trying by all possible means to escape. There was an Indian woman, with her long black hair streaming behind her, brandishing a long stick, with all the dogs in excitement, and the Indian lads shouting at them, 'Ho! ho! hurrah!' until they were all in. Once in the water they sank until little but their heads were visible. They swam across in groups, and were carried a long way down by the current. I rode one of these animals one hundred miles with nothing but a thong tied to his lower jaw. Though imperfectly broken in, all these horses are good-tempered, and quite free from vice, and much more easy to manage than our own. They are terribly persecuted by the wolves. At Edmonton, where they are obliged to keep them in the woods, and at a distance to prevent their being stolen by the Blackfeet, from one hundred to two hundred are lost every year."

I left Fort Assiniboine on the 12th August, and two days after had my own first experience in swimming a horse over a river, which gives a somewhat peculiar sensation. I was surprised at the depth to which I sank—up to the waist, the horse's body nearly perpendicular; but the motion was easy, and it appeared to be no great exertion to the horse. My travelling companion liked the looks of it so little, however, that after crossing I had to return to bring him over. On this occasion we made a raft to get the baggage across. Poor William, the missionary's interpreter, got into sad disgrace, culminating in a few strokes with the whip, for letting his employer's baggage horse get a bad sore. Many of the horses had frightful sores such as I never have seen before or since. All that was done was to shift the load to another horse.

I found Mr. Rundle a good little man, very young and inexperienced, and of no obvious fitness for his calling, and very ignorant. I thought to introduce Keble's "Christian Year" to him, but he shook his head over the passage in the poem for Communion of the Sick—

¹⁵The Rev. Robert Terrill Rundle, a Wesleyan Methodist missionary in the North-west from 1840 to 1848. In 1849 he returned to England.

"Where shall we learn that gentle spell?
Mother of martyrs, thou canst tell";

and I found that by "mother of martyrs" he understood the Blessed Virgin.

He greatly felt and lamented his own exclusion from church privileges, and asked my opinion of the propriety of administering the Holy Communion to himself alone.

I took an opportunity at one of our camps to put his interpreter, who was a boy of, I suppose, not over fourteen, to a test as to his capacity. I gave him a passage of a few lines taken out of an easy part of one of the "Articles of Religion" to translate into Cree. Two or three days later I gave him his translation to put back into English. He did it better than I expected, and certainly reproduced the sense, if not the language.

I was received by Mr. Rowand,¹⁶ widely known among the Plain Indians as the "Big Mountain"; he was a powerful, but not very tall man of rough, determined aspect, and very lame from an early accident. Hunting alone as a young man he had been thrown from his horse and had broken his leg. By some means intelligence reached the fort of what had occurred, and before the whites could do anything an Indian girl had mounted and galloped off in the direction indicated. She found him, nursed him and saved his life, and he married her. She was a middle-aged woman when I saw her. Years afterwards I met their son, a doctor, in Quebec.

Rowand's authority among the Blackfeet tribes was such that I should not have hesitated to accept the safe conduct he offered me, to make a little tour to the South Saskatchewan under the guidance of one of the chiefs, but for two reasons—one was that time did not permit it, the other was of a totally different nature. There still existed a form of hospitality among them characteristic of the most primitive races, and which, when Lewis and Clarke for the first time crossed the continent in 1805 was universal west of the Mississippi. The ethnologist will know to what I allude*; I did not wish to encounter it. Christian instruction, which has now reached even the Blackfeet, and closer intercourse with a more advanced race, have caused this barbarism to disappear.

I left Edmonton on the evening of August 19th, in a small barge provided by Mr. Rowand, and as the Indians on the plains were at that time in a state of ferment, he supplied me with muskets and ammunition for the crew. He advised me also to avoid observation and travel as much as possible by night, for though it could not be said that the hostility of the Indians was directed against the whites, a white scalp is as good as another, indeed better; and an unsuccessful war party led by a reckless young chief would probably not be at all particular. This gave a spice of adventure to the next few days' journey, which was an agreeable change from its usual tameness. The first night I took the helm, as we merely drifted with the current, and there was nothing to do but to keep the boat in the stream. I startled the men, who were sleeping, nearly out of their senses by firing at a couple of elk which came down to drink.

**Fœminas mariti filice se ipsas in usum hospitum cedebant.*

¹⁶John Rowand (1787-1854), a former partner of the North West Company, who had been a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company since 1826. He had been for many years in charge at Fort Edmonton.

However, we had no adventure for some days. We never slept on shore, but looked out some secluded spot to land twice a day for breakfast and supper, where our smoke was not likely to be observed. We reached Fort Pitt on the evening of the 21st.

Fort Pitt I found to be a trading post of the second rank, but rather more defensible than many larger ones, the Indians being a real danger. Not many weeks before my arrival a harmless party of Crees were coming to the fort to trade, when some vagabond Blackfeet attacked them, killed two or three, and would have killed them all if the people in the fort had not sallied out and driven them off. Among the survivors was a squaw, who was shot through the body; the bullet had entered her chest rather high and passed out at the right shoulder. The wounds externally were nearly healed, but she was persuaded that so great a medicine-man as I passed for could do her a great deal of good, and she would not be satisfied until I did something—that was to stick a patch of diachylon plaster on the scars, which quite contented her. After this one or two Indians brought me their guns to charm; I found a drop of red sealing-wax on the barrel very efficacious.

We reached Carlton House on the 25th, and here I gave up my muskets, as the Plain Indians rarely range much beyond that part. There were a good many lounging about in all their finery. In one of their lodges there was an extremely handsome young squaw, as it proved a bride; the upper part of her face was painted a bright vermilion, the lower part black. As I was rude enough to look rather fixedly at her, she turned round and faced the wall of the lodge, a rebuke I felt I had deserved. She was an Assiniboine beauty, with fine regular features, a good figure, and the coal-black eyes of her race.

I have intimated that there was an adventure in store. Leaving Carlton on the 26th August as usual in the evening, and it happened to be a dark night, we were hailed from the bank in some language which was not Cree; and further on I became very conscious in the pure night air of the smell which proceeds from a large number of horses, though it was too dark to distinguish objects on shore. We kept in the shadow as much as we could, and thinking we had passed all danger, about half an hour later, I made for land to cook our supper. The spot selected, which I thought to be an island, had a high wooded bank, and was dark enough for any purpose of concealment, there being no moon. The fire was lighted and the kettle hung, well filled with buffalo hump and tongues, when my ear caught a faint distant sound, which became louder and nearer. The men now heard it and took alarm, "Les Assiniboines, les Pieds noirs!" they shouted; "Embarquez, M. Lefroy, embarquez!" and seizing their own kettles, they tumbled down the bank and into the boat in a twinkling. I confess I was carried away and followed them, but I had enough presence of mind to return and possess myself of the kettle containing my supper, which in the confusion had been left on the fire; and as soon as I had gained the boat we pushed out into the middle of the stream. Here we lay on our oars to listen. There was dead silence for a moment, then a loud outcry of hooting of owls, cries of animals, dogs and wolves, burst from many parts of the wood we had just left, giving us no reasonable doubt that Indians had been stealing upon us. It was they who imitated the cries, as they are accustomed to do. We stayed no longer in their neighbourhood, but crossing silently into the shadow on the other side, we escaped an awkward surprise.

I asked Baptiste afterwards if he thought the savages wanted to cut his

throat. "Je ne sais pas, monsieur," was his reply; "Je ne serais pas le premier homme qu'ils ont servi de même." This was too true to be contested.

I reached Cumberland House on the 29th of August; just one year previously I had left this station to go north. The interval comprised my hardest work and most varied experiences. I had never had an hour's illness or met with any serious disappointment.

I should have said that although in descending the Saskatchewan I saw little of the countless buffaloes supposed then to roam over those boundless plains, and could not do so because the river is sunk between high banks, I did see one very large herd and occasionally a deer or two; wolves were very common, trotting along the bank abreast of us.

I was struck by an extraordinary example of the effect of alcohol upon perfectly uncontaminated systems. We had taken two young Indians into the boat; they found a small keg which had contained spirits, but quite empty; they put in some water, rinsed it out and drank the liquid; in a very few minutes they were both lying in the bottom of the boat helplessly drunk.

My voyage from Cumberland House to Norway House, where I arrived on the 6th September, offers nothing noticeable except the running of the Grand Rapids on the 2nd, of which I thought a good deal at the time. It is very much more formidable than the "Sault de S. Marie." It saved us, however, a long portage. I again coasted the north end of Lake Winnipeg, but as I have nothing to show, I suppose the weather was against observations.

I reached Fort William again on the 10th October without any particular mishap, and left it on the 12th. Forty years afterwards, in 1884, I met at Arthur's Landing, a hale old gentleman who told me he had been my host on this visit. Our progress along the north shore of Lake Superior was very slow, but we arrived at the Pic on the 16th; here we were detained by stress of weather until the 21st.

I should mention that one of the five days in 1844 was a day of detention at Cape Gargantua. Had Longfellow's poem of "Hiawatha" then been written, I should have been greatly interested in this classical spot; as it was, I fully appreciated it as delightfully sheltered and picturesque.

Here my men devoted a lop-stick to me—a lop-stick being a pine tree, the straightest and tallest that can be selected, which, after being stripped of its lower branches, is dedicated with libations to some person, a compliment in my case all the more sincere as I had nothing to give them.

My short stay at the "Sault" on this occasion was marked by a very painful incident. One of my men named Narcisse Arel, managed to get at spirits, and drank to such excess that word was sent me he was dying. I found him insensible and could not get any blood to flow from his arm. I then gave a cut with the lancet across the temple, but scarcely a drop of blood followed, and he actually died, though at what moment I could not say. There was no doctor and no minister on our British side of the "Sault," of course no coroner. We dug a grave next day and buried him, but previous to this the body was laid out and a kind of service performed, in which the guide Louis took the leading part. Standing at the head of the bier he uttered a long prayer in his own language, most impressive in voice and manner, but no one understood it sufficiently to interpret. The other men were very reverential. As all were Roman Catholics I did not interfere at all, but merely attended the funeral.

Having heard that the celebrated American sportsman Colonel Crockett,¹⁷ immortalised by his dialogue with the Coon, was the officer in command of the United States troops on the other side, I went over one evening to call upon him. It was about eight o'clock, and he had gone to bed, but being made to understand that a British officer wished to pay his respects, he sat up and gave me a courteous reception. Under the circumstances I shortened my visit. He was in a very bare barrack room, and an empty whisky bottle on the table helped to account for his early retirement.

I left the "Sault" on the 5th November, and reached "Penetanguishene" on the 14th. Winter had set in, and although the lake was still unfrozen, smaller bodies of water had become ice, and every drop splashed from the paddles froze where it fell. It was therefore great *misère* for the men. I was warmly welcomed by Captain or Lieutenant West of the 83rd Regiment, who commanded a small detachment stationed there (with what object it would be hard to say), and indulged myself with a day's rest and enjoyment. West had a tame otter in his rooms, the only one I ever saw; it was as playful as a kitten, a very pretty pet.

"Penetanguishene" was, and indeed still is, very much out of the world. The clergyman, a Mr. Hallen, told me that going one day to his church, he found the road in the possession of a brown bear. The animal showed no disposition to be rude; on the other hand, it did not make way for him—he had to make a *détour* himself. The blacksmith of the village had the previous year caught a young bear cub, which grew quite tame in his family. As cold weather came on the place it chose to hibernate was under his forge, and it remained there all the winter quite undisturbed by the noise overhead. When, however, the spring returned, all its acquired tameness disappeared, and they were forced to kill it.

My entry into Toronto, where I arrived about 8 P.M. on November 18th, was a noisy one. Louis the Iroquois and the two half-breeds accompanied me in a separate waggon, and as I found it impossible to prevent people from giving them spirits on the road, they were in a high state of exhilaration, singing their canoe songs at the top of their voices, as they were accustomed to do on arriving at a fort. I was fortunate enough to meet Mr. Dease,¹⁸ the former companion of Thomas Simpson, and as he was going to Montreal next day and had known Louis of old, he kindly took charge of them; they gave him the slip, however, at Kingston, and when I arrived at Montreal myself on the 25th November, nothing had been heard of them.

Here ended my tour. I had still a little business to settle at the Hudson's Bay House, Lachine, and to report myself to the military authorities, which done, I returned to Toronto, and arrived there on the 5th December.

¹⁷It would seem that Lefroy was here the victim of a hoax, for Colonel Davey Crockett, to whom reference is evidently made, had died in Texas in 1836.

¹⁸Peter Warren Dease (1788-1863), formerly a chief factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had retired from the fur-trade in 1842, and had settled near Montreal. From 1836 to 1839 he was, with Thomas Simpson, in command of the expedition which explored the Arctic coast from the mouth of the Mackenzie River to Point Barrow. His name was pronounced as though spelt "Dace".